

3 April 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Counterforce Capability Against Minutemen,
and the NIPP

1. The National Intelligence Estimate 11-8-68 does not support the proposition that the Soviets are going for a first-strike capability. Paragraph 6 contains the nearest to a direct statement that there is on the subject: "We consider it highly unlikely that the Soviets will try for strategic superiority of such an order that it could be translated into significant political gain." (Two sentences have been telescoped to make this quotation.)

2. But the Estimate does give the Soviets a technical capability to develop systems in the 1970's that could be combined to create a significant force against hardened Minuteman sites. [REDACTED]

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3. Attached is a paper by our NIPP expert explaining some of the things that lie behind this situation. (Incidentally, this paper may show you why some of our people think that the NIE 11-8 has to be technical and lengthy, since the implications of technicalities can be important.)

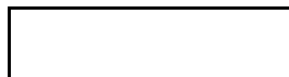
4. The NIPP (National Intelligence Projections for Planning) was started at the request of the Systems Analysis people in 1963. It sets forth in Tables, year by year for ten years into the future, the numbers and characteristics

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of Soviet military units and of Soviet weapons and weapons systems. It starts from the judgments in the NIE and carries forward, in precise figures, the estimates which of necessity have to be stated in general terms for any period beyond some two to five years. The Systems Analysis group, and more recently the military themselves, have always insisted that the NIPP would only be useful to them if it went through the regular coordination process of a National Intelligence Estimate and received the approval of USIB. It does.

5. We called these tables National Intelligence Projections for Planning, made a valiant effort to distinguish them from National Intelligence Estimates, and tried to hold distribution down. Practically speaking these efforts have been unsuccessful. We are aware of the exceedingly tenuous nature of these projections. Variations from the reality which eventually emerges are unavoidable, especially under the pressure of military participants who are concerned always to hedge against any underestimate of the threat. Systems Analysis and probably military planners as well, are aware of the tenuous nature of the projections. Yet we are told that the NIPP is used more widely than the Estimates themselves. We presume that Secretary Laird, in being briefed on what "intelligence" had to say about future Soviet military forces, received material from the NIPP as well as from the Estimates.



ABBOT SMITH
Director
National Estimates

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Attachment
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cc: DDI